

More Delaware Students Excel in AP Classes

Progress in statewide effort to ensure more students have access to college-level courses and earn credit before graduation

Dover, DE – More Delaware public school students took and passed Advanced Placement (AP) exams last year, according to new data released by the College Board. The total number of test takers increased by 4.5 percent between 2015 and 2016, an increase of 221 students to bring the total to 5,100 test takers. The total number of exams taken by Delaware public school students also increased by 4.4 percent, or 380 exams, for a total of 9,107 exams. At the same time, the number of exams in which the students earned a passing score of 3 or higher (on a five-point scale) increased by 11 percent (487 exams for a total of 4,898 exams). About 900 more tests from Delaware students received passing scores compared to just 3 years ago. Prior to that, it had taken seven years to increase the number by 1,000.

Governor Jack Markell and Delaware Secretary of Education Steve Godowsky highlighted the statewide progress while visiting AP classes today at Dover High School in the Capital School District.

“With significant increases in participation and success by students in not only advanced placement classes, but also dual enrollment college-level courses, more Delaware students are setting themselves up for success in college and the workplace,” said Governor Markell. “I applaud the hard work of the educators and administrators across the state who have made it possible to increase access for students to these opportunities and to ensure they receive high quality instruction in these challenging classes.”

Dover High saw an overall 19-percentage point increase last year in its AP enrollment, with an increase of more than 6 percentage points for students scoring a 3 or higher on the exams. In particular, the school saw enrollment growth in its calculus, chemistry and computer science AP classes. It also saw increases in the percentage of students passing the exams for biology, calculus, chemistry and U.S. history.

The growth at Dover High reflects the progress made statewide.

“Not only are we seeing more students embracing the challenge of these college-level courses, we are seeing more succeeding,” Godowsky said. “This means they graduate high school and arrive on their college campuses already having college credits, saving them significant time and money as they work toward their degrees.”

Under the leadership of Governor Markell, the Delaware Department of Education’s wide-ranging state strategy to increase college-going has included investments in boosting success in AP and dual enrollment classes. This summer, the state announced another round of grants to support schools in this work. The Delaware Goes to College grant and the AP Incentive grant support innovative and proven programs that increase student access to rigorous coursework and drive all students towards post-secondary education, including certificates, apprenticeships, and two-year and four-year degrees.

Coinciding with the increase in AP scores, Delaware saw the largest jump in educator participation in AP Insight this past year. AP Insight provides Delaware educators with a virtual Professional Learning Community (PLC) platform and classroom resources to elevate student achievement in AP classes. Currently, 109 teachers participate in AP Insight across nearly every high school in the state that offers an AP course.

The department sponsors teacher participation in AP Insight for teachers in five courses: biology, chemistry, calculus, world history and U.S. history. And the state continues to see the benefits of this program. After two years of participating in AP Insight for biology, Delaware saw a 16-point increase in students receiving a 3 or higher on the AP Biology exam (48% to 64%).

Last month about 170 educators representing 9 districts and one charter school attended the AP Teachers Summit in Dover. Teachers and administrators working with students in Advanced Placement received AP Insight training facilitated by College Board.

This is the second year in a row that the state saw an increase in AP Biology participation and exam scores. This year, the state saw 5 percentage point increase in participation and 4.1 percent increase in those earning a 3 or higher on the exam.

Like with AP, the state also has seen significant growth in the number of students taking dual enrollment courses: Last school year, statewide attendance in dual enrollment courses surpassed 2,700 in 170 courses. That is triple the number of classes and participants since Markell announced an initiative to increase the opportunities in his 2014 State of the State address.

Of the Top 10 most popular AP courses in Delaware, seven saw increases in the percent of students achieving a 3 or higher on the end-of-course exams.

Last month the College Board also released national and state SAT results. The College Board release included data for the Class of 2016. These results are different from those released by the state in August because the summer release was for the April school-day administration of the SAT given to all public school juniors in the state (Class of 2017). The College Board also launched a redesigned test in the spring, making it

difficult to compare the 2016 results to previous years' data. The College Board's Class of 2016 results includes students who took both the old SAT, last administered in January 2015, and some who took the new SAT.